

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 2140 An Act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services.

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact*. NAMI Maine advocates strongly to work to provide mental health care services to the 1 in 4 Mainers who are diagnosed with a mental health challenge. We also support the reduction to any barriers to foster growth to a robust community mental health system.

Before the occurrence of COVID-19, Maine was unfortunately recognized nationally as having a critical shortage of mental health providers. Since the onset of the pandemic, the shortage has continued to grow. The Health Resources and Services Administration, as well as Mental Health America, identify Maine as having significant deficits in the mental health workforce at many levels. Although it is imperative, that we ensure that professionals working with our most vulnerable individuals are appropriately trained and qualified, individuals who have already met requirements to serve others in their home state have proven their competence. Maine has already entered Interstate Compacts for other professions, demonstrating that this is an effective tool in increasing resources in Maine. Professionals that already have existing interstate compacts for licensure include nurses, physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech and audiology language therapists, and professional counselors. The Nursing Licensing Compact is the longest in existence, being established in 1999. Reflection on the implementation has been that it has decreased administrative burden for the individual and agency, increased the ability to streamline hiring processes, and at times assisted with the implementation of new or emerging practices that a practitioner may be familiar with.¹ The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact found that the implementation increased the workforce by 10-15%, with rural and underserved states benefitting the most from the program.² The success of similar programs demonstrates the necessity to increase the workforce capacity in the State of Maine.

NAMI Maine supports the work and initiatives of this committee in ensuring that critical resources and services are provided in the state. The creation of a robust workforce and reducing the barriers to working in a rewarding, although challenging field, will increase the ability to support our communities. Because of this, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 2140.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: *Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.*

¹ *Evolving with Change: The Benefits of Expanding Interstate Licensure.* (2020, February 8). NCSBN. <https://www.ncsbn.org/news/evolving-with-change-the-benefits-of-expanding-interstate-licensure>

² Schaler-Haynes, A. M. N., Magda. (2023, April 11). *Can Interstate Licensure Compacts Enhance the Health Care Workforce?* Milbank Memorial Fund. <https://www.milbank.org/2023/04/can-interstate-licensure-compacts-enhance-the-health-care-workforce/>

LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

Hannah Longley, LCSW, Clinical Director of
Advocacy and Crisis Intervention
(207) 622-5767 □ HannahL@namimaine.org

POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
www.namimaine.org/advocacy